Officers Fired Gas, S.U. Probers Say

DEC 2 1972

NO States-Item

BATON ROUGE (AP) — The official state committee investigating circumstances of the student-police confrontation on the Southern University campus here that left two dead has determined that officers fired the first tear-gas canister.

The 12-member panel headed by State Atty. Gen. William Guste made the conclusion in a statement issued Friday at the completion of the first week of its probe of the Nov. 16 disturbance.

The committee reported: "After viewing motion picture films frame by frame, still photographs, hearing witnesses and reviewing interviews taken by the attorney general's staff, the evidence is clear that the first object thrown was a tear-gas canister and came from the law-enforcement units and not from the students."

Several officials, including Gov. Edwin Edwards, had insisted earlier that films of the violence showed the first tear gas coming from the ranks of students outside the administration building on the predominanly black campus. And they contended that officers merely responded to the provocation.

The two students were killed as sheriff's deputies and State Police flushed students from the building.

Guste said Thursday the investigation had established "pellets from a shotgun" had killed Denver Smith, 20, of New Roads and Leonard Brown, 20, of Gilbert.

Lawmen have claimed they fired nothing but tear gas in the incident. But Edwards and others conceded later that an officer might have mistaken a shotgun shell for the nearly identical tear-gas canister.

An all-black committee which met for two days earlier this week concluded that the students were shot by a sheriff's deputy. That panel blamed officers, university administrators and state officials for the tragedy.

The Grambling College Disciplinary Board, in an unusual hearing before a federal judge, today continues its review of the suspension of students.

The suspensions stem from a boycott of classes over grievances that began Nov. 1.